

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00
XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /086 W
-----037830 241918Z /44

P 241836Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4524
INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL
ALL OTHER CANADIAN POSTS (POUCH)

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 07679

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CA
SUBJECT: RESULTS OF AUG 18-19 PREMIERS' CONFERENCE IN NEW
BRUNSWICK

REF: HALIFAX 0400

1. SUMMARY: AT AUGUST 18-19 PREMIERS' CONFERENCE IN NEW
BRUNSWICK, ANGLOPHONE PREMIERS REJECTED QUEBEC PROPOSAL FOR
RECIPROCAL AGREEMENTS ON MINORITY LANGUAGE EDUCATION
RIGHTS. RECOGNIZING, HOWEVER, UNFAVORABLE RAMIFICATIONS
OF FLAT REJECTION OF QUEBEC PROPOSAL, THEY COUNTERED WITH
ACTION PLAN TO MAKE "BEST EFFORTS" TO PROVIDE FRENCH
LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN ANGLOPHONE PROVINCES. THIS STATE-
MENT OF INTENT WAS DISMISSED BY QUEBEC PREMIER LEVESQUE AS
"MERE WORDS". IN ECONOMIC DISCUSSIONS, PREMIERS FOCUSED
ON UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM AND CHARACTERIZED PRESENT HIGH
LEVEL AS UNACCEPTABLE. THEY SUGGESTED VARIETY OF FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT REMEDIES INCLUDING TAX CUTS AND EFFORTS TO
SPEED UP HOUSING CONSTRUCTION. PREMIERS CALLED FOR END OF
WAGE AND PRICE CONTROLS ON FIXED DATE, WITH ABOLITION OF
ANTI-INFLATION BOARD TO BE SUCCEDED BY NEW MONITORING
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AGENCY WITH REDUCED POWERS. ON US/CANADA RELATIONS,
PREMIERS CALLED FOR GREATER PROVINCIAL VOICE, PARTICULARLY
IN TRADE MATTERS. END SUMMARY.

2. PREMIERS' CONFERENCE AUGUST 18-19 AT ST. ANDREWS, NEW
BRUNSWICK ATTRACTED UNUSUALLY HEAVY ATTENTION BEFORE,
DURING AND AFTER EVENT BECAUSE OF QUEBEC PREMIER LEVESQUE'S

PROPOSAL FOR RECIPROCAL AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER PROVINCES ON
MINORITY LANGUAGE EDUCATION RIGHTS (REFTEL).

3. OTHER PREMIERS REJECTED LEVESQUE PROPOSAL FOR RECIPROCAL AGREEMENTS BUT JOINED IN STATEMENT PLEDGING TO "MAKE THEIR BEST EFFORTS TO PROVIDE INSTRUCTION IN EDUCATION IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH WHEREVER NUMBERS WARRANT". STATEMENT ALSO CALLED ON PROVINCIAL MINISTERS OF EDUCATION TO STUDY STATUS OF FRENCH EDUCATION IN THEIR PROVINCES AND REPORT FINDINGS WITHIN SIX MONTHS TO PREMIERS THROUGH COUNCIL OF EDUCATION MINISTERS. EACH PROVINCE IS THEN TO FORMULATE PROGRAM TO FURTHER FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION.

4. LEVESQUE REFUSED TO SIGN THIS JOINT STATEMENT, REPORT-EDLY DESCRIBING IT AS "MERE WORDS . . . CLOSE TO BEING A JOKE". ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, HE INDICATED THAT FAILURE OF OTHER PREMIERS TO ACCEPT HIS PROPOSAL WILL PREVENT ENGLISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS COMING TO QUEBEC IN FUTURE FROM ATTENDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS AFTER PASSAGE (NOW IMMINENT) OF QUEBEC LANGUAGE LAW, BILL 101.

5. DURING FIRST DAY ECONOMIC DISCUSSIONS, PREMIERS FOCUSED ON UNEMPLOYMENT, ISSUING COMMUNIQUE STATING THAT "UNEMPLOYMENT IN CANADA AT ITS PRESENT LEVEL IS UNACCEPTABLE". AS REMEDIES, PREMIERS CALLED UPON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO CUT TAXES TO IMPROVE CONSUMER PURCHASING POWER, AND ACTION TO

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SPEED UP HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, EITHER THROUGH TAX MEASURES, ACCELERATED GOVERNMENT PROCEDURES OR INCREASED FUNDING.

6. PREMIERS CALLED ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO SET DATE FOR END OF WAGE AND PRICE CONTROLS AND TO CREATE NEW MONITORING AGENCY TO SUCCEED ANTI-INFLATION BOARD IN POST-CONTROL PERIOD. "NEW AGENCY" WOULD NOT HAVE FULL POWERS OF AIB, E.G., IT WOULD LACK POWER TO ORDER ROLLBACK OF INCREASES DEEMED EXCESSIVE, AND WOULD OPERATE INDEPENDENT OF GOVERNMENT.

7. TREATING US-CANADA AGENDA ITEM, PREMIERS CLAIMED "LEGITIMATE INTERESTS AND CONCERNS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA" FOR THEIR PROVINCES. WHILE THEY RECOGNIZED PRIMACY OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE RELATIONS, PREMIERS CALLED FOR STRONGER VOICE IN RELATIONS WITH U.S. IN VIEW OF MAGNITUDE OF CROSS-BORDER TRADE. STATEMENT NOTED THAT "IMPORTANCE OF U.S. MARKET IS SUCH AS TO SUGGEST THAT IN ADDITION TO MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS, CANADA HAS ALSO MUCH TO GAIN FROM BILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNITED STATES".

8. COMMENT: QUEBEC PREMIER LEVESQUE WENT TO ST. ANDREWS WITH HIS LANGUAGE PROPOSALS IN NEARLY A "NO LOSS" SITUATION. HAD ANGLOPHONE PREMIERS SIGNED BILATERAL AGREEMENT THIS ACTION WOULD HAVE SEVERELY DAMAGED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S POSITION THAT MINORITY LANGUAGE RIGHTS SHOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO BARTER, EVEN IN AREA OF EDUCATION, FOR WHICH PROVINCES HAVE EXCLUSIVE AUTHORITY. TRUDEAU HAS REPEATEDLY STATED THAT MINORITY LANGUAGE RIGHTS SHOULD BE PROTECTED BY CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE. HAD SPLIT IN RANKS OF ANGLOPHONE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 OTTAWA 07679

PREMIERS APPEARED, WITH SOME SIGNING AND SOME NOT, FEDERAL POSITION WOULD HAVE BEEN SIMILARLY WEAKENED WITH ADDED DISADVANTAGE OF SEEMING DISARRAY AMONG SUPPORTERS OF UNITED CANADA. AGREEMENTS WITH ANGLOPHONE PROVINCES WOULD, MOREOVER, HAVE BEEN SEEN AS TRIUMPH OF LEVESQUE STATESMANSHIP, WITH QUEBEC AS PROTECTOR OF FRANCOPHONES ACROSS CANADA.

9. FURTHER, THERE WAS FEAR AMONG SOME FEDERALISTS THAT PROVINCIAL AGREEMENTS IN EDUCATION WOULD BE "FOOT IN THE DOOR", PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ) THESIS THAT INDEPENDENCE WITH ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION IS REASONABLE PROSPECT, WITH BILATERAL PROVINCIAL ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS TO FOLLOW QUEBEC'S SEPARATION.

10. FLAT REJECTION OF LEVESQUE PROPOSALS, WITHOUT COUNTER OFFER, WOULD ALSO HAVE PLAYED INTO PQ HANDS. PQ THEN WOULD HAVE USED NEGATIVE RESPONSE AS YET ANOTHER INDICATION OF LANGUAGE RIGHTS. WITH SUCH NEGATIVE, PROVINCIAL REACTION, MOREOVER, PQ COULD HAVE POINTED TO FUTILITY OF FEDERAL BI-

LINGUALISM PROGRAM AS HOLLOW EXERCISE WITHOUT SUPPORT
ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

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11. IN EMBASSY VIEW, ANGLOPHONE PREMIERS' STATEMENT OF
INTENT TO USE "BEST EFFORTS" TO PROVIDE FRENCH LANGUAGE
INSTRUCTION WAS BEST DAMAGE LIMITING GAMBIT UNDER THE
CIRCUMSTANCES. OFFICIAL IN FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL RELATIONS
OFFICE CONFIRMED THIS VIEW, ADDING THAT, ALTHOUGH FEDERAL
PRESENCE WAS NOTICEABLY AND PROPERLY ABSENT DURING
SESSIONS, FEDERAL OFFICIALS WERE, IN FACT, WORKING CLOSELY
WITH SOME ANGLOPHONE PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVES.

12. DISMISSING STATEMENT OF INTENT AS "MERE WORDS",
LEVESQUE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY USE ARGUMENTS ABOVE RE ANGLO-
PHONE LACK OF CONCERN FOR FRENCH LANGUAGE MINORITY RIGHTS,
LIKELY WITH POSITIVE EFFECT ON SOME QUEBECOIS. BUT STATE-
MENT OF INTENT HAS BEEN INTERPRETED BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE
MEDIA AS STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION, AND COMMENTATORS HAVE
EXPRESSED HOPE THAT, IF "MERE WORDS" ARE TRANSLATED INTO
ACTION, THIS WILL REGISTER FAORABLY WITH MODERATE QUEBEC-
OIS. THIS, OF COURSE, REMAINS TO BE SEEN BUT EVEN STATE-
MENT ITSELF SERVED TO NEGATE CHARGE OF TOTAL ANGLOPHONE
INDIFFERENCE.

12. IN SUM, LEVESQUE CARRIED AWAY FROM ST. ANDREWS A TACT-
ICAL VICTORY BUT NOT OF SIZE HE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED. ENDERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETINGS, PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977OTTAWA07679
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770306-0141
Format: TEL
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770829/aaaaaxtw.tel
Line Count: 202
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 HALIFAX 400
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06-Apr-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1500666
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RESULTS OF AUG 18-19 PREMIERS' CONFERENCE IN NEW BRUNSWICK
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2c2e1054-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009